

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PANAMA 00260 122301Z
ACTION ARA-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 SAB-01 SS-14 SP-02 L-01 INR-05
INRE-00 PRS-01 /031 W
-----122307Z 022954 /62
O 122240Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 345

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 0260

STADIS////////////////////////////////////

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PN, PQ, US
SUBJECT: JANUARY 9 INCIDENTS

REFS: (A) PANAMA 227; (B) PANAMA 237

1. THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE JANUARY 11 PRC MEETING AND THE GOVERNOR'S BACK CHANNEL MESSAGE (REFTELS) REFLECT ONLY PART OF THE INFLAMED FEELINGS AMONG CZ RESIDENTS AS A RESULT OF THE JANUARY 9 EVENTS, PARTICULARLY THE BURNING OF AN AMERICAN FLAG. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, WE HAVE RECEIVED PHONE CALLS ASKING WHAT WE PLAN TO DO ABOUT THIS SITUATION. TODAY PAT FULTON CONVEYED A MESSAGE FROM AN ATLANTIC SIDE GROUP CALLING ITSELF THE "TIT-FOR-TAT COMMITTEE" THREATENING TO BURN REPLICAS OF PANAMANIAN FLAGS UNLESS EMBASSY FILES A STRONG PROTEST BY JANUARY 14. YESTERDAY'S MIAMI HERALD, WIDELY READ IN PANAMA, ALREADY REPORTS THAT A US PROTEST WAS UNDER CONSIDERATION. TOMORROW ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY VESEY PLANS TO INFORM CIVIL COUNCIL AND LABOR LEADERS THAT GOVERNOR HAS REQUESTED ME TO MAKE A DIPLOMATIC PROTEST.

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2. QUITE APART FROM THESE PRESSURES, HOWEVER, I WAS ALREADY CONTEMPLATING SUCH A STEP AND SO INFORMED THE PRC YESTERDAY. UPPERMOST IN MY MIND IS MY WISH TO MAKE A STRONG PROTEST FOR THIS UNCONSCIONABLE ACT WITHOUT LOSING SIGHT OF OUR ONGOING INTEREST IN NOT DISRUPTING THE NEGOTIATIONS.

3. I HAVE DRAFTED A STRONG BUT MEASURED PROTEST NOTE WHICH I PLAN TO DELIVER TO FONMIN BOYD AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY. I DO NOT INTEND TO BLAME BN DIRECTLY AS IT WOULD ONLY ELICIT A STRONG DENIAL, PROBABLY FROM TORRIJOS AGAIN. NEVERTHELESS ON DELIVERING NOTE, I WISH TO PUT GOP ON NOTICE THAT IT IS PLAYING DANGEROUS GAMES WHICH NEED-LESSLY IMPERIL CHANCES FOR A SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATION AND THAT THEY ARE TEMPTING CZ HOT HEADS TO RETALIATE.

4. I THINK MY PROTEST SHOULD BE FOLLOWED UP BY CALLING IN AMBASSADOR GONZALEZ-REVILLA TO EXPRESS DEPARTMENT'S CONCERN OVER THE PROVOCATIONS. IT MIGHT BE WELL FOR THE SECRETARY-DESIGNATE TO RAISE THIS MATTER DURING HIS JANUARY 18 APPOINTMENT WITH FACIO. IN MY OPINION, THIS IS AN APPROPRIATE OCCASION TO CALL ON MUTUAL FRIENDS SUCH AS COSTA RICA AND COLOMBIA TO COUNSEL MODERATION TO PANAMA. I DO NOT RECOMMEND INVOLVING THE NEGOTIATORS AT THIS TIME.

5. THE PROTEST NOTE IS ALSO DESIGNED TO DAMPEN THE ANGER OF CZ RESIDENTS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
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